

11-17-1963

Big G to Jas, 17 November 1963

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Recommended Citation

Unknown), (Author, "Big G to Jas, 17 November 1963" (1963). *Correspondence*. 707.
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November 17, 1963
Via Aladino Goyoni 27/10
Rome, Italy

Did give you some thought last week and kept my fingers crossed but after reading the Atlantic edition of the TIME the other day and noting your picture along with that of P.B. Johnson on the same page, I decided that you had survived the ordeal without being hung by the ying-yang. Also sent telegram which I hope reached you at Asheville, largely because I wouldn't want to think that eight piastres went down the drain to no avail. Reading between the lines of the TIME article, I have the feeling that your declamation was something of a triumph of the cause of the just and righteous, like Cato you destroyed Carthage. I have been trying to find a reaction or comment on the TIME article in the local press but so far nothing. If something should turn up, I'll clip and send to you for your files. I saw no point to writing before your denouement largely because I felt you had your mind on more pressing matters but I suppose you know I was doing a bit of thinking. And now, have they asked you to leave the fair state or dare they risk such action? If you plan to leave, where are you going? Are you still interested in the Oregon System?

The political situation is extremely critical. I don't think the More government will last long. And now to answer your question concerning Karen's proposed venture. The boy's name is Eugene Coultet. She met him in France. He is from Jackson and is a graduate of Millsaps and at present is at the University of North Carolina doing a Master's in philosophy. He plans to go on for his Ph.D. somewhere, probably Columbia. His mother teaches Latin and German at Millsaps. His father is southern representative for Columbia Artists and something of a partner in Early Maxwell Associates. We met the boy in New York along with his mother and dad and they seem to be nice people. The kid is rather quiet and appears to be fairly sharp. Personality-wise he seems to be a counterpart to Karen's wild gyrations. Of course, I put Cosa Nostra to work on the deal to find out a few things and the reports on the boy and the family are good so we can't complain. Besides, Karen seems to think the sun rises and sets on him and so.... They are talking about a wedding next August. There is no point in holding the clambake in Lake Oswego since Karen's friends and associates are not of that area. Eugene doesn't hold any particular attraction since most of her friends will be long gone from that area. San Diego would even make less sense. And since we won't be home in the sense of having a place where the show could be put on, I believe they have decided, at least for the moment to marry in Jackson, Mississippi. His home is there. Karen's friends can reach that area a helluva lot easier than they can Lake Oswego and it makes no nevermind to us. Meg will probably fly home early next summer to help her with the details and to help spend money. I'll probably fly home for a week or so and do the paternal duties and then fly right back. And now you know about as much as I do about the launching.

All Common Market, largely because of De Gaulle's nationalism is in deep trouble. All Eddie sent the clipping of Betty and the announcement. She seems to be radiant and she sends her love and things. We'll want to get her something. I'll probably arrange for a package of Kleenex to be sent or some such silly thing. I suggest sending her a check and Meg blew a fuse. Said, taint the right thing to do. So, it's gotta be Kleenex or some equally stupid thing she won't be able to use like gold plated toothpicks. However, somebody will think of something probably months late but so it goes.

Will write again soon. Much love to Dutch, Gail. Regards to those interested. I take it that William is serving his country defending the ramparts and stuff like that while making his usual pungent observations on the vagaries of the human race. What are his plans? Eddie is talking about coming over here for a few months, of going to graduate school, of a myriad of things but I suppose the little gal he is courtin' will probably nail him down one of these days and tell him what he can and cannot do.

Yours,

We have a nice attic apartment with a magnificent view of Rome from the top of Monte Mario, probably the last view in Rome after the colossally stupid building

program that boxed in most of the beautiful places. The building is brand spanking new and we are the first tenants. We have more rooms than we can possibly furnish and speaking of furniture, ours arrived from home --- in pieces. It would have taken a genius to wreak more havoc. The refrigerator is smashed beyond repair, our living room chairs are in pieces, my desk a shambles, my chest of draws carved up, several dishes broken, etc., etc. And so you know what I am doing this week, filling out insurance forms, cussing out Lyon Van and Storage, threatening to sue, hiring a lawyer, getting minor repairs done so that we can live with the stuff, ---- and buying a housefull of new stuff so that we can get on with this business of living.

The Oregon System Italian Studies Center at Pavia is booming along but not without its problems. The man I have in charge up there from home lacks guts and the kids tend to run over him. The majority are having a ball and learning a lot and getting maximum benefit from the experience. We have a few bad apples which I'll probably ship next time I go up. One boy discovered wine and is trying to drink the country dry. A few of our girls find the "latin-lover" irresistible and rumors are that they are trying to build the bridge or lay the bed of understanding in more ways than were scheduled in the prospectus. But what can one expect from 36 kids 18-21 years old. In the main, the program is doing very well and in many respects, particularly in housing and in food, is much superior to anything else in Europe, including the Stanford programs.

The political situation is extremely critical. I don't think the Moro government will last more than a few months. There just ain't any way to really bridge the gap between the demands of the Socialists and the Demo-Christian program. Meanwhile, in the background hovers the Commies with the strenght drawn from a tremendous increase in votes in the last election. Another general election right now would be touch-and-go. I wouldn't be at all surprised, if held, that Italy voted herself into the Commie ranks much in the way Czechoslovakia did a decade ago. Several factors are responsible: (1) the stinking corruption in the government with scandal after scandal breaking and (2) the critical economic picture aggravated by a fast moving inflation. The economic picture is a complicated one. First, the economy is booming but the rise in the standard of living is moving at even a faster clip so that the country is importing far more than it is exporting. The big money men of Milan are frightened that the drain on the reserves, plus the pressure on the lire from advancing prices and wages, plus the discontent reflected in the elections will create, upon coming together, a complete breakdown. Results they are buying Swiss francs and American dollars at a fantastic rate and shipping them off to Swiss banks for safekeeping---creating further pressures on the lira and the cycle continues. A key to the problem lies in the fact that credit buying was introduced to the masses as the great American "way of life" and the entire country is now in hock on the time-pay plans of 12-60 months with fantastic interest rates. And no one dares stop the plunge since halting the credit now would close 80% of the Italian factories and plunged business into bankruptcy. So damned if you are and damned if you aren't. We are in for some interesting times here this winter. To complicate matters the Common Market, largely because of De Gaulle's nationalism is in deep trouble. All of this is complicated further by Kennedy's stupid Multilateral force idea which no one in Europe is about to buy as it now stands. Prices here are very high. The only thing left that is very much a bargain is a haircut and you know how many of these I need. Food, rents, furniture, utilities, etc., are U.S. prices and above. The halcyon days of the American buck buying a boat load of stuff are over. If you decide to come over for a visit, bring money, any old kind of negotiable currency will do but bring a bundle.

Will write again soon. Much love to Dutch, Gail. Regards to those interested. What do you hear from the Willis? How are the Forbennerrys? I was thrilled to hear that Tad Smith is your Faculty Club president. Merit will out, there is no doubt about it.

The gals on Via Flaminia (now moved to Via Acqua Acetosa) send regards.

Yours,

We have a nice attic apartment with a magnificent view of Rome from the top of Monte Mario, probably the last view in Rome after the colossally stupid building